

REMARKS

The present amendment is submitted in response to the Final Office Action dated December 12, 2003. In the Office Action, the Examiner allowed claims 21, 22, 25, 26 and 29-31. In addition, the Examiner objected to claims 8, 17 and 18 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. Further, claims 1, 2, 4, 10, 13, 19, and 20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tatum in view of Ng and Staples. Moreover, claims 5 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tatum in view of Ng and Staples and further in view of Williams. Still further, claims 6, 7, 11 and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tatum in view of Ng and Staples, and further in view of Japanese Patent No. 09248766 (JP '766). In addition, claim 9 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tatum in view of Ng and Staples and further in view of Kipp. Moreover, claims 14 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tatum in view of Ng and Staples and further in view of Stapp.

Applicants note with appreciation that claims 21, 22, 25, 26 and 29-31 have been deemed allowable, and that claim 8, 17 and 18 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claim 8 has been incorporated into independent claim 1, and claims 17 and 18 have been rewritten in independent form as newly added claims 32 and 33. In addition, claims 9 and 10 have been amended to be consistent with amended claim 1. Finally, claim 11 has been amended to correct a typographical error. Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims

should be deemed allowable over any of the references of record. Allowance of all claims is respectfully requested.

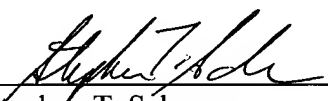
CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing remarks and amendments, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the claims in the application are in allowable form and that the application is now in condition for allowance. Applicants further respectfully submit that neither further search nor consideration would be necessitated by entry of this amendment; therefore, entry is proper and should be effected.

If, however, any outstanding issues remain, Applicants respectfully urge the Examiner to telephone Applicants' attorney so that the same may be resolved and the application expedited to issue. Applicants' respectfully request the Examiner to indicate all claims as allowable and to pass the application to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: March 10, 2004

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